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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

363rd meeting
Monday, 3 April 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

Chair: Ms. Martinic.....(Argentina)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Organization of work (*continued*)

The Chair: Before the Commission continues with the general exchange of views, it will revert to item 3, "Organization of work", of its provisional agenda, as contained in document A/CN.10/L.78, in order to elect the officers of the Disarmament Commission.

Election of other officers (*continued*)

The Chair: I have been informed that the Group of African States has endorsed the candidature of Mr. Hamza Alokly, Second Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Libya to the United Nations, as Vice-Chair from the Group of African States.

If I hear no objection, I will take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Alokly as Vice-Chair of the Commission at its 2017 substantive session by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chair: On behalf of the Commission, I would like to warmly congratulate the newly elected Vice-Chair of the Commission and to wish him success in discharging his duties. We will take up the election of one remaining Vice-Chair from the Group of African States at a later stage.

General debate (*continued*)

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): The Commission will now continue the general debate with the list of speakers inscribed for the general debate. I urge those delegations that have not yet done so to inscribe their names on the list as soon as possible.

To maximize the time available to us during the general exchange of views, I propose that we maintain the practice of using a rolling list of speakers, which is currently open to all delegations wishing to take the floor. I would also like to remind all delegations that are already on the list to keep in mind that a rolling list implies that they should be prepared to speak at any time, possibly sooner than they had originally planned. I would also like to remind delegations that we will follow the established format for the length of statements of 15 minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of groups, and 10 minutes for delegations making statements in their national capacity.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would like to begin by congratulating you, Madam Chair, and the other members of the Bureau, on your election to lead the Disarmament Commission at its 2017 substantive session. We are pleased that you, as a representative of our Latin American and Caribbean region, are in charge of directing the work of this important part of the United Nations disarmament machinery. You can count on our full support in your efforts to achieve our stated goals.

Venezuela would also like to express its heartfelt condolences to the people and authorities of the Russian Federation for the loss of life resulting from today's terrorist attack at a train station in Saint Petersburg.

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My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered earlier today by the representatives of Indonesia and El Salvador on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, respectively (see A/CN.10/PV.362).

The Disarmament Commission begins its substantive work in 2017 against the backdrop of an international political arena fraught with challenges to international peace and security. In that regard, the promotion of multilateral disarmament measures and agreements is undermined by the inability of military powers to advance the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. We are concerned about the risk of the triggering a new arms race with grave implications for peace following the greatest military power's announcement that it intends to increase its military budget. Also concerning are interventionist and aggressive actions carried out by countries against duly constituted Governments, which negatively affect international peace and security, in flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Disarmament Commission, which gathers us here once again at this session to formulate recommendations on disarmament, this year faces the challenge of overcoming the paralysis that has plagued it for 18 years, as it has been unable to adopt substantive recommendations due to a lack of will of a minority group of member States. In that connection, we recall that important results were achieved at previous sessions of the Disarmament Commission, such as the 1988 principles of verification, the 1996 guidelines for international arms transfers and the 1999 guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon free zones.

We therefore reiterate the urgent need to attain concrete results on the eve of the conclusion of this three-year cycle of the work of the Commission. We urge nuclear-weapon States to show real commitment and flexibility in order to meet the objectives that have been set for this cycle of the mandate. The objective of eliminating nuclear weapons is a political and moral imperative that binds all States Members of the Organization, particularly nuclear-weapon States. We must not forget that over 70 years ago, the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked some of the darkest chapters in the history of humankind. The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the main priority of the disarmament and international security agenda.

Our discussions in this forum must help strengthen the standards, principles, obligations and commitments of nuclear disarmament, as agreed in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament (resolution S-10/2), as must the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the results of its review conferences. The impetus, enthusiasm and participation of the delegations that participated in the recently concluded first session of the United Nations Conference on the negotiation of a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons, pending their total elimination, showed the interest and commitment of most States that attended that historic session to tackle one of the gravest threats to human beings, despite the non-attendance of the nuclear-weapon States, which benefit from their so-called security.

Venezuela believes that the adoption of a legally binding instrument on the prohibition of nuclear weapons reinforces article VI of the NPT. As such, it will provide specific guidance on which effective and concrete measures ought to be adopted if we are to keep our commitments to rid ourselves of nuclear weapons. The Treaty must provide a good foundation for carrying out the provisions of resolution 68/32, sponsored by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The resolution establishes the holding of a high-level international conference by 2018, at the latest, to consider the elements to include in a broad nuclear-weapon convention that would spell out general obligations, prohibitions and practical measures for irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament, with concrete deadlines.

Venezuela, as a State signatory to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which established the world's first nuclear-weapon free zone 50 years ago in Latin America and the Caribbean, a densely populated area of the planet, reiterates that the creation of nuclear-weapon free zones based on agreements undertaken freely by regional countries is an essential step in the consolidation of international peace and security and also contributes to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

We also reaffirm our commitment to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon free zone in the Middle East, pursuant to the agreements reached by the NPT States parties in 1995, 2000 and 2010. We regret that the 2015 NPT Review Conference was

blocked by the unwillingness of a small group of States to adopt a final document. We once again call on all parties to put aside their agendas in order to ensure the denuclearization of the entire planet, especially the Middle East.

Our delegation is of the view that practical confidence-building measures in the sphere of conventional weapons play an important role in the promotion of understanding, transparency and cooperation among States, as well as in increased security and stability — in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting their voluntary implementation and the specific concerns and security situations of different countries.

Venezuela has been promoting confidence- and security-building measures in the context of the Union of South American Nations by exchanging information and remaining transparent on defence spending and military activities, security measures, guarantees, implementation and verification — with a view to contributing to the consolidation of regional and international peace and security.

In conclusion, Venezuela reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the only specialized deliberative body of the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. We therefore reaffirm our will to work alongside all Member States to make concrete and significant disarmament gains.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): On behalf of the United States delegation, please allow me to congratulate you, Madam Chair, and the Government of Argentina on your election to chair the Disarmament Commission at its 2017 session of. Your expertise in this field is well known and well regarded, and we look forward to working with you as you ably discharge your important duties.

Let us also express our appreciation to Mr. Kim Won-soo, High Representative for Disarmament, for his support of this important body.

This year's Disarmament Commission session straddles two other multilateral events relevant to our own work — the nuclear ban treaty negotiations, which just ended its first session last week here, in New York, and the 2017 Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, which begins on 2 May. At this opportune moment, please allow me to explain the position of the United States towards both of those processes.

The 2016 Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on nuclear disarmament, which did not operate by consensus, produced a final report that predictably included language calling for a nuclear-weapons ban treaty. Countries leading the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons initiative used that language as the basis for resolution 71/258 during the 2016 session of the First Committee to launch negotiations for a nuclear-weapons ban treaty, which began on 27 March. Importantly, the OEWG reports, the General Assembly resolution and now, the negotiations themselves, have all been opposed by a significant number of States, including both nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States. The element of consensus that underpins successful disarmament initiatives is entirely lacking. We oppose the report and note that many other countries joined us in opposition to this ill-conceived endeavour.

A ban treaty will come at enormous cost to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) political process without securing the elimination of a single nuclear warhead or improving the security of any State. It risks deepening the divide between States, polarizing the political environment on nuclear disarmament and further complicating future prospects for achieving consensus, whether in the NPT review process, the United Nations or the Conference on Disarmament.

Moreover, a ban treaty ignores the essential connection between disarmament and international security conditions, a connection that is acknowledged in the NPT's preamble and in consensus decisions of its review conferences. By doing so, it seems to delegitimize the extended deterrence relationships on which many of our allies rely. For these reasons, the United States opposed the OEWG, opposed the ban treaty resolution (resolution 71/75) and will not participate in negotiations on a ban treaty.

The NPT remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. Without the non-proliferation guarantees that it was designed to help ensure, it will be impossible to achieve the disarmament goals that remain our long-term objective. We look forward to the first Preparatory Committee meeting for the 2020 Review Conference. As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the NPT, in 2020, it is important to recall the NPT's

role in helping prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons and providing enormous security benefits to all States. We urge all NPT parties to reflect on how the NPT supports our common fundamental interests and how all can contribute to strengthening the NPT in defence of these interests.

As the 2020 review process gets under way, there is a clear need to restore balance to the NPT dialogue. The United States is in the midst of a review whose purpose is to consider those approaches that would best achieve that outcome, all in support of enhancing national security. We urge all NPT parties to reject the false divisions over the best way to proceed on disarmament and the Middle East, so that they do not hamper consensus during this NPT review cycle.

Together we must engage in a respectful dialogue requiring that we not only defend and explain our own points of view but also that we genuinely listen to the points of view of others. Indeed, there is much discussion and listening needed from all parties in seeking to advance our common interests, including on cases of non-compliance, expanding nuclear arsenals in some countries, the difficult international security environment, achieving conditions that facilitate progress on disarmament, and applying nuclear energy to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is unfortunate that in recent years some have suggested that multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation can be pursued without the consensus of all participants. The abandonment by some States and many non-governmental organizations of the consensus approach in this field because it is too difficult or taking too long is a major source of the division that we are facing today. It has been counterproductive to making real progress on disarmament and should be rejected.

We should take up again once again the culture of consensus-building and consensus decision-making that has yielded far more successes over the past 50 years than disappointments and will do so again if we are patient and persistent.

This year we are set to conclude work on the Commission's current triennial issues cycle, which has focused since 2015 on two long-standing agenda items: in Working Group I, recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and, in Working Group II, practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We thank our colleagues from Kazakhstan and Morocco, respectively, for their effective chairmanships of these Working Groups over the last two years and will work actively with the representatives of Bulgaria and Venezuela, also respectively, as they assume these posts in this critical final year of our present agenda.

Last year both Working Group chairs drafted non-papers for ongoing consideration. Our deliberations on the topics before us have been frank and useful. From the United States perspective, and because of a number of ongoing or forthcoming national policy reviews, some of the language in the existing non-papers will need to be altered or removed so that we can arrive at a consensus outcome in three weeks' time. While this will not be an easy task, if we work together and are modest in our ambitions, the Commission can achieve a positive result.

The United States was pleased that General Assembly resolution 71/82, which conveyed the Commission's annual report to the Assembly, also contains a provision encouraging the Commission to hold informal consultations at the 2017 session on the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities. We are prepared to engage substantively in these discussions and encourage others to do the same.

Finally, as we work to finalize our efforts on the issues before the Disarmament Commission this year, the United States pledges to do all it can to facilitate a positive outcome. We look forward to working with you, Madam Chair, and the members of the Commission as we pursue this important objective.

Mr. Korneliou (Cyprus): At the outset, Madam Chair, on behalf of the Cyprus delegation, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) at this session and wish you every success in discharging your duties. We are convinced that your rich diplomatic experience will lead this session forward, and I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

I would like also to thank the Disarmament Commission for its efforts in adopting guidelines and recommendations on disarmament issues. Cyprus also joins previous speakers in extending our condolences and support to the Russian delegation following today's events in Saint Petersburg.

International peace and stability constitute the primary objective of Cyprus's foreign policy. Cyprus remains committed to substantive progress in all relevant disarmament forums. In this spirit, Cyprus has signed and ratified all the main disarmament and non-proliferation treaties. In the same context, and in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), Cyprus submits regular reports on its implementation. We have also been a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Australia Group since 2000.

Cyprus also aspires to accede to the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Wassenaar Arrangement and earnestly hopes that the objections raised by one country in this regard will at last be shelved, thus sparing all of us from such unmerited politicization, which only jeopardizes the purpose of these treaties.

Furthermore, Cyprus signed the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation in 2002 and has participated in the Proliferation Security Initiative since 2005. In May 2015, Cyprus co-hosted, with the United States of America, a successful tabletop regional exercise in the framework of the Initiative in an effort to promote regional cooperation in counter-proliferation efforts.

Bearing in mind the fact that that the risk posed by nuclear weapons is too great to ignore, and fully understanding the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of their use, Cyprus has consistently been a strong advocate of multilateral cooperation and inclusiveness in the pursuit of common objectives. Our strong commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament is also concretely expressed through our efforts to be vigilant as to the threat of the spread of weapons of mass destruction in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East region.

In the area of outer space, we value the contribution of confidence-building measures in the field, and we consider it essential that States continue to work collectively to keep it safe and secure and free from conflict for the benefit of all humankind.

In conclusion, once again, let me express our hope that the Disarmament Commission will overcome any deadlock, achieve progress and issue recommendations as tasked. The Commission can rest assured of the full support and cooperation of the delegation of Cyprus. We look forward to contributing to the discussion ahead.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): Before I begin my statement, I would like to extend our condolences to the Russian Federation following today's horrible terrorist attacks.

We thank the former Chair and his team for the efforts during the previous session. We congratulate you, Madam Chair, and assure you and the Bureau of our full support during this session. We also welcome the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who participated in this morning's meeting, and thank him for the valuable work he has done.

We recognize the important role that the Disarmament Commission was designed to play as the specialized deliberative subsidiary body of the General Assembly that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues. Especially against the backdrop of the present polarization within the disarmament community, the Disarmament Commission has a very important role to play in providing a platform for enhancing dialogue and cooperation, as well as a sincere exchange of views. As this is the final year of the present cycle, we will be able to build upon what has been done in the past two years. That said, I would like to thank the former Chairs, Kazakhstan and Morocco, for their work and look forward to working with the new Chairs and to supporting them in any way we can. We also look forward to discussions on a possible third agenda item.

Mr. Gutiérrez Blanco Navarrete (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, I would like to echo my colleagues in offering condolences on behalf of my delegation following the terrorist attack that occurred in Saint Petersburg and to convey our full support to the Russian Government and the families of the victims.

I congratulate you, Madam Chair, as well as the Vice-Chairs and Chairs of the Working Groups, on your elections. As you said, we must retain the role of the Disarmament Commission as a platform for dialogue and building trust, particularly given the fact that we face uncertain times and new threats to international peace and security.

We have all worked hard over the past two years and are now at the end of a three-year cycle. There are elements for consensus, and so we should achieve tangible results. If not, our efforts and the Organization's resources will have been expended in vain. Now that we are all gathered here today, we can send a very clear message. Let us shoulder our responsibility to

build a safer world. The Commission can count on my delegation's support in that endeavour.

I would also like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for the excellent work done in supporting disarmament efforts at the United Nations.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. It is the foundation for making progress on nuclear disarmament and an important element in developing peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We believe that the commencement of the review cycle, beginning with the meeting, in May, of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties, will allow for greater implementation of the Treaty by balancing its three pillars. In that effort, the 2010 Action Plan is a valuable instrument because it was born out of consensus.

Spain is committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. We are ambitious and we are also concerned about the humanitarian impact of the use of nuclear weapons. We are also realistic and understand that the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons must be achieved gradually, in accordance with article VI of the NPT and by considering the security dimension and the position of nuclear-weapon States. We call on those States, in particular those that have an even greater responsibility because of the size of their arsenals, to gradually reduce those arsenals and implement transparency and confidence-building measures.

Spain firmly believes in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, and we are therefore frustrated by the fact that a conference to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East has still not been held. As the Commission knows, the Spanish delegation worked hard on that endeavour during the most recent NPT Review Conference. We encourage all countries of the region to agree on the terms that would allow for the holding an inclusive conference as soon as possible. The immediate challenges of negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty and promoting the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are key opportunities to demonstrate a firm and bold willingness to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

With regard to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, my delegation co-sponsored Security Council resolution 2310 (2016), which reaffirmed the importance of the Treaty and helped to strengthen the nuclear-test ban as a de facto international norm. We urge those States that have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty, in particular the annex 2 States, to do so as soon as possible. With regard to the fissile material cut-off treaty, we welcome the recent establishment of the high-level expert preparatory group that will prepare recommendations on the treaty. From a technical and political perspective, we believe that there is a solid foundation on which to start negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

Verification is another key element in the disarmament process. We welcome the opportunities offered by resolution 71/450. We believe that the Commission will pay due attention to that issue.

Spain is firmly committed to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as we demonstrated during the biennium 2015-2017 when we assumed the chairmanship of the three Security Council non-proliferation committees. We believe that that is the greatest threat the world faces today. Furthermore, the growing risk of terrorists and other non-State actors using weapons of mass destruction spurred efforts on the comprehensive review of the status of implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which my country was honoured to lead. Those efforts were transparent, consultative and participatory. The review bore fruit with the adoption of Security Council resolution 2325 (2016), which was adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, born of consensus and sponsored by 77 States, including all members of the Security Council. That text shows that it is possible to reach consensus on such complex issues as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In conclusion, the term weapons of mass destruction is often used, but I stress that we should not forget that conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons, claim the most victims. They also have an adverse impact on the security and development of States. That is why we are optimistic about the progress being made in preparing for the third Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In that regard, we support the efforts of France's chairship and pledge our full support.

Similarly, we note that the number of States that have ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is increasing and take this opportunity to encourage all States to ratify it so as to achieve its universalization, which is vital to international peace and security.

Lastly, my delegation welcomes the inclusion of outer space as a third item of the agenda. Outer space must be a secure and stable place. It must be used in a peaceful manner based on equitable and multilaterally accepted norms. Accordingly, we encourage confidence- and transparency-building measures, including the adoption of principles of responsible conduct in outer space.

Mr. Bessedik (Algeria) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is truly a pleasure to see you, Madam, in your function as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). I will deliver my statement in English.

(*spoke in English*)

At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election to head the 2017 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, and you can obviously count on our full support and cooperation. I extend my congratulations to the Chairs of the Working Groups on their respective elections.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Indonesia, the representative of Cameroon and the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of African States and the Group of Arab States, respectively (see A/CN.10/PV.362).

Algeria attaches the utmost importance to general and complete disarmament as a means of ensuring international peace and security, and reiterates its continued commitment to multilateral diplomacy as the core principle of negotiation with regard to the disarmament agenda. In that context, my delegation reaffirms the central role of the United Nations as a universal, multilateral forum to address disarmament issues, as well as the relevance and centrality of the Disarmament Commission, and stresses the particular importance of this session, which comes at the end of the current cycle. The Commission is expected to adopt recommendations related to its two substantive agenda items, and we look forward to seeing it fulfil its mandate and achieve a meaningful outcome so as to advance global disarmament and non-proliferation. In that regard, my delegation calls on all Member States to show the political will and flexibility necessary to enable the UNDC to reach agreement on substantive recommendations to the General Assembly.

As a State party to the main treaties related to nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, my delegation reaffirms that nuclear disarmament remains its highest priority and reiterates its concern about the existence of nuclear weapons and their potential use or threat of use. In that context, the only guarantee against nuclear weapons lies in their total elimination with a view to achieving a world free of nuclear danger. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to again stress the need to universalize the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and ensure compliance in a balanced and comprehensive manner with each of its three pillars. In that regard, my delegation reaffirms the legitimate right to develop research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Like many Member States, we note with deep regret the clear lack of progress in the process of the multilateral nuclear-disarmament negotiations, in particular with regard to the implementation of the 13 measures to realize nuclear disarmament agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference and the plan of action adopted at the 2010 Review Conference. My delegation reaffirms that nuclear-weapon States in particular have to fully comply with the NPT's obligations and specifically the provisions for nuclear-disarmament goals.

Algeria reiterates its deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would be caused by the detonation of a nuclear weapon. With that firm conviction, my country has endorsed the humanitarian pledge in its efforts to stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. In that context, last week, my delegation welcomed the holding of the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, and we encourage all member States to participate in that process so as to consolidate the other existing nuclear-disarmament instruments. My delegation reiterates its call for the convening of a high-level conference in 2018 to review progress achieved on nuclear disarmament, and emphasizes the need for early and appropriate preparations so as to ensure a successful conference. Algeria stresses the importance of achieving universal adherence to the

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to allow its entry into force and contribute to the global process of nuclear disarmament.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones constitutes not only a confidence-building measure but also an important step towards achieving nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation goals. Algeria, which was one of the first countries to draft, sign and ratify the Treaty of Pelindaba, in particular, calls on nuclear-weapon States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the relevant annexes to the Treaty. Furthermore, the example of the Treaty of Pelindaba and other instruments calling for nuclear-free-zones should also be followed in the volatile region of the Middle East. In that context, my delegation deeply regrets that that part of the world is still prevented from establishing, and deprived of enjoying, such a zone despite the adoption by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference of the resolution on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the region. My delegation reaffirms that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East remains valid and stresses its strong commitment to its full implementation.

Concerning the issue of conventional arms, my delegation would like to stress that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to threaten peace and stability in many countries and regions, particularly in North Africa and the Sahel region, and constitutes a source of supply to terrorist groups and organized crime. Based on its national experience, my delegation reaffirms that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons are more than ever of the utmost relevance. We continue to emphasize the importance of their full, balanced and effective implementation. My delegation would also like to stress that international cooperation and assistance are essential to the implementation of those two instruments.

In that context, my delegation welcomes the adoption by consensus last year of the outcome document of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and looks forward to further actions aimed at eliminating those weapons in advance of the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action to be held in 2018. With regard to the issue of confidence-building measures in the area of conventional weapons, my delegation underlines that, in pursuing the goal of contributing to international peace and security, such measures should be undertaken in full conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

My delegation would like to underline the progress made last year by the working group on conventional weapons, and we hope that at this session there will be a consensus on meaningful recommendations.

I would like to conclude by expressing the hope that all Member States will show the political will and flexibility necessary to allow the UNDC to achieve success in its session.

Mr. Gallhofer (Austria): We congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your chairpersonship. We look forward to finalizing our work for this cycle guided by your excellent leadership and that of the two Working Group Chairs to allow the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) to live up to its mandate, as set out at the tenth special session of the General Assembly, by building on the concrete progress achieved in other forums, and to agree on concrete recommendations to be submitted to the General Assembly.

Austria remains fully committed to substantive progress in all relevant disarmament forums, and especially in the General Assembly under Article 11 of the Charter. As we are aware, the deliberations on nuclear disarmament have gained significant momentum in recent years. Based on the outcome of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the humanitarian initiative on the impact of and the risks associated with nuclear weapons has provided a set of arguments for urgent progress on nuclear disarmament and for moving away from a nuclear-weapon-based security system.

The humanitarian pledge builds upon these arguments and draws conclusions that should be drawn from the new evidence and formulates a different set of priorities. It stipulates that humanitarian concerns should be at the centre of all deliberations, obligations and commitments with regard to nuclear disarmament. It underscores the importance of the protection of civilians against risks related to nuclear weapons, and

lists a number of interim measures to reduce the risk of nuclear-weapon detonations. Finally, it highlights the urgent need to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons in the light of the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the risks associated with them.

Building on the clear recommendations of last year's Open-ended Working Group in Geneva, the General Assembly, with a two-thirds majority of States present and voting, adopted resolution 71/258, entitled "Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations". Through that resolution, the General Assembly decided to convene in 2017 a conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. This is a major breakthrough from the decades-long standstill of multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament and a long-overdue fulfilment of article VI of the NPT.

The first session of the negotiations just finished and showed a strong, united will to achieve a clear prohibition of nuclear weapons — and a strong sense of urgency. As our Vice-Minister Alexander Marschik put it last week in the General Assembly Hall during the high-level segment:

> "Waiting for disaster is not a strategy. That is disrespectful of the victims of nuclear weapons, past and future. There is a right time to begin the process of prohibiting nuclear weapons. That time is now."

In that spirit, we aspire to complete our negotiations on the basis of the Chair's first draft at the upcoming June/July session of the conference. Austria has been arguing for a strong, lean prohibition treaty. Details of our position can be found in our statements available on PaperSmart.

That clear political will and urgency should also be reflected in the deliberations of the UNDC and the recommendations we are tasked to provide to the General Assembly. Extending the status quo or even accepting the strengthening of nuclear arsenals by modernization is clearly unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of States. We look forward to constructive discussions to finish this session by agreeing a text that reflects our common desire of a world free of nuclear weapons and the expectations of peoples from all around the globe.

We also look forward to constructive engagement in the upcoming NPT Preparatory Committee in Vienna. Austria remains fully committed to the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the NPT, and an important element in the further development of nuclear-energy applications for peaceful purposes. Austria is committed to upholding and preserving the NPT as a key priority. Likewise, my country continues to be a strong supporter of an early start to negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We look forward to seeing the relevant High-level Expert Preparatory Group deliver tangible results and to examining its report in the Committee on Disarmament.

Austria fully acknowledges the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy as reflected in Article IV of the NPT. But in any case, this right ought to be executed applying the highest standards of safety, security, waste management and non-proliferation. Austrian constitutional law, however, prohibits not only nuclear weapons, but also facilities with the purpose of obtaining energy by nuclear fission. That is also reaffirmed in the Austrian Government's commitment to our anti-nuclear-power policy, taking into account the principle of free choice of energy mix. That paramount principle was reconfirmed in resolution 66/288, endorsing the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, recognizing that the activities of countries in broader energy-related matters are of great importance and are prioritized according to their specific challenges, capacities and circumstances, including their energy mix.

Against that backdrop, it is evident that any formulation that might be construed as promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy for power generation in a generalized manner would be inconsistent with the aforementioned outcome reached at the highest political level. Moreover, as my delegation repeatedly stressed during the last triennial cycle, any discussions on this topic are to be conducted in the relevant forums, as set out by the General Assembly, notably in its resolution 1145 (XII) pertaining to the relationship between the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In the area of conventional weapons, we value the contribution that practical confidence-building measures can make to the maintenance and enhancement of regional and international peace and security. For this cycle we continue to recommend taking into consideration the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and in particular from the effects of the use of conventional weapons. Among this, the devastating effects of the use of explosive weapons with wide area effect in populated areas are of particular concern. As the former Secretary-General reaffirmed in his most recent report on the protection of civilians,

> "when explosive weapons had been used in populated areas, an astonishing 92 per cent of those killed or injured were civilians" (*S/2016/447, para. 3*).

Austria, together with like-minded countries and civil society, continues to promote progress in that area.

A further area of strong concern for Austria is lethal autonomous weapons and their compatibility with international humanitarian law. We look forward to the report of the Group of Governmental Experts at the annual meeting of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, in November 2017.

As Chair of the sixteenth meeting of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Austria is concerned about the sharp rise in the number of people killed in 2015. Our chairmanship priorities were announced in Santiago at the end of last year. They centre on universalization, victim assistance, mine clearance, stockpile destruction and making progress on budgetary issues.

We strongly welcome the improvements made to the Register of Conventional Arms, among other things by including small arms and light weapons on a trial basis. We call on all States to report regularly to the register and to take advantage of help offered, if so required.

Lastly, let me underline the importance Austria attaches to the landmark Arms Trade Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

On working methods, as last year, we would advocate for an invitation to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research to provide relevant expertise — for example via video-link — as provided for in resolution 61/98. Furthermore, taking into account the important and extremely useful contributions of civil society to disarmament in various forums, we would also strongly encourage its increased interaction with the UNDC. There are many ways to integrate this — for example by holding informal sessions in the format of interactive dialogues with experts from academia, non-governmental organizations or other relevant institutions in order to deepen our knowledge and to allow for proposals of possible bridging pathways to energize the work of the Commission — something that is very sorely missing.

In conclusion, let me express once more my hope that the UNDC can overcome its deadlock, achieve concrete progress and issue recommendations as tasked through its mandate. We encourage you, Madam Chair, to continue to seek ways to improve working methods and enable more constructive and focused deliberations.

Mr. Gone (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): First of all, on behalf of my delegation, I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to the Russian Government and people in the aftermath of the attack in Saint Petersburg this morning and to convey my wishes for a speedy recovery for the wounded.

On behalf of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, I wish to congratulate you, Madam Chair, and through you, your country, on your election to chair the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Your experience and leadership are a real asset, and it is hoped that under your chairmanship the Commission will finally be able to emerge from the stagnation in which it has been mired for far too long. I also congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Odo Tevi, whose experience contributed to the success of the last session.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Cameroon on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (A/CN.10/PV.362).

The work of the 2017 substantive session is taking place in a global security context that remains very complex. Indeed, our planet continues to harbour more than 15,000 nuclear weapons. Military budgets are on the rise again. Ballistic missiles are positioned and revive tensions in several parts of the world.

Conventional weapons continue to fuel conflicts and keep several States instable. Terrorism has now spread to virtually every country in the world.

Meanwhile, as has been noted, since 2000 the Disarmament Commission has been unable to fulfil its mandate to make recommendations to the Assembly. This lack of significant progress in the work should be of concern to us. We must move forward. That necessarily means overcoming our differences by putting the issue of disarmament in a perspective of lasting peace and virtuous cooperation between peoples and nations. From this point of view, for my delegation, the voice of multilateralism embodied by the United Nations appears to be an excellent opportunity.

Nuclear weapons are still the only weapons of mass destruction not prohibited by a legally binding instrument. The time has come to admit that disarmament, in order to achieve its goal of a world of peace and progress, must be general, complete and irreversible. In this spirit, doctrines and strategies of nuclear deterrence should be excluded from national defence systems. With regard to the regulation of these weapons, my delegation is convinced that the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 71/258 will help to advance the debate on this subject. Regulating the elimination of nuclear weapons and arsenals, far from undermining the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, would further strengthen it and surely lead to its universality. Furthermore, due to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, my country would like to reaffirm here the right of non-nuclear-weapon States to receive negative security assurances.

More than 20 years after its opening for signature, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains inapplicable. Although the moratorium on nuclear testing has been generally satisfactory, my delegation would like to call for the responsibility of all parties, particularly the States included in the Treaty's annex 2, to ensure that the Treaty is implemented. It is to be feared that the impasse in the CTBT is affecting other processes, in this case, the future Treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, which Côte d'Ivoire will support firmly when the time comes. To that end, my delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the initiators of the informal consultations held on 2 and 3 March, which enabled us to deepen our understanding of the challenges ahead in the forthcoming negotiations.

My delegation attaches great importance to the adoption of recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. Small arms and light weapons, as the statistics show, lead to more than 700,000 victims every year. Small arms and light weapons and their illicit circulation are fuelling terrorism, organized crime and all forms of trafficking, and require more appropriate control by our States. To combat all these scourges, since 2009, Côte d'Ivoire has been marking and tracing the weapons of its defence and security forces through its National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons, in accordance with the recommendations of the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

My country, which has already benefited from material and financial support from the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme, Japan, Germany and most recently Great Britain, would welcome the support of other partners to build capacity in arms control, arsenal management and the care of victims. In addition, Côte d'Ivoire would appreciate the assistance of bilateral and multilateral partners, in the context of the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, which it ratified in 2015.

Mr. Sun Lei (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, on behalf of the Chinese delegation I would like to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election as Chair of the current session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, I am confident that you will steer the session to positive results. My delegation wishes to assure you and other delegations of its full cooperation. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Odo Tevi of Vanuatu, for his work at the previous session of the Commission.

China condemns in the strong terms the terrorist attacks in the Saint Petersburg subway this morning and expresses its profound sorrow at the loss of life. Our hearts and prayers are most sincerely with the grieving families in Russia. China resolutely opposes terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and supports every effort by the Russian side to combat terrorism. In that regard, we will increase our counter-terrorism cooperation at the international level, also with Russia.

At present, the trend of our times towards peace, development and win-win cooperation has gained stronger momentum. Meanwhile, humankind is in an era of profound transformation and change. With increasing security challenges and risks, geopolitical hotspot issues are vexing and difficult to solve. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation processes are faltering, and unconventional security threats are on the rise. Rules and norms on the new and emerging strategy frontiers have yet to be put in place. Global strategic balance and stability is being confronted with challenges. When visiting the United Nations Office at Geneva earlier this year, President Xi Jinping of China set out the proposition to answer the call to action, in view of the current security landscape, to build a community with a shared vision for the future of all humankind.

All countries should pursue common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, create a peaceful and stable international regional security environment, and build a world of lasting peace and common security through win-win cooperation. As a member of the international community, China actively fulfils its due international responsibilities, is willing to be a champion of peace and development and takes a constructive part in global governance. China consistently pursues a national defence policy, which is only defensive in nature, positively advocates for a new concept of international security, constructively takes part in global security governance and promotes the healthy development of international arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes — all of which makes China a staunch force in maintaining world peace and regional stability.

China has made steadfast efforts to consolidate the multilateral disarmament-treaty mechanisms and is committed to strengthening the universality, authority and effectiveness of international arms-control and non-proliferation treaties. As the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons established three pillars: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. All parties should abandon double standards and utilitarianism and implement their respective treaty obligations in a comprehensive, earnest and balanced manner.

At present, there is a widening dispute as to how to advance nuclear disarmament. China believes that nuclear disarmament cannot be achieved overnight and can be taken forward only through an incremental approach, following the principles of maintaining the global strategic balance and undiminished security for all. Negotiations on nuclear disarmament should take place only within the existing international disarmament and non-proliferation regime, such as the Conference on Disarmament (CD). Countries possessing the largest nuclear arsenals should take the lead in reducing their nuclear weapons substantially and substantively, thereby creating conditions for the ultimate realization of the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons.

China firmly opposes the proliferation of nuclear weapons in any form and is working towards the diplomatic resolution of regional hotspot nuclear issues. China has signed and ratified all additional protocols to the treaties on nuclear-weapon free zone that are open for signature and will continue to support non-nuclear-weapon States, in accordance with the realities of each particular region, to establish nuclear-weapon free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among regional States.

On the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, China has always supported its early negotiations in the CD and participated constructively in the work of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts. China abstained in the voting in the First Committee on resolution 71/259 because it firmly believes that the CD is the only proper venue for the negotiation of the a fissile material cut-off treaty, and that concluding such a treaty on the basis of the Shannon mandate in the CD is the only way out. At the same time, China is of the view that the participation of more key parties is essential to the negotiation of a treaty.

China is of the view that establishing practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms not only contributes to reducing confrontation, suspicion and misgivings, but also helps promote international and regional disarmament processes. As important mechanisms of transparency and confidence-building measures within the framework of the United Nations, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures have played an active role in enhancing mutual trust among Member States and promoting international peace and security.

China has taken part in the aforementioned mechanisms and submitted annual reports to the United Nations. China also participated in the new round of work of two United Nations Groups of Governmental Experts last year, which contributed to the sound development of both mechanisms. China has always been engaged in conventional-arms-control efforts and attaches great importance to addressing humanitarian concerns raised by the abuse of such weapons. As a High Contracting Party to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and its five Protocols, China has always supported all work related to the Convention in earnest and honours its obligations under it and its annexed protocols. Since 1998, China has provided more than Y90 million in humanitarian assistance to nearly 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America in the form of money, equipment, technical training and donations, among others, and provided training to nearly 500 technical demining experts.

China attaches great importance to combating the illicit trading of small arms and light weapons, actively participating in and earnestly implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In that regard, China has adopted a host of effective measures on legislation, law enforcement, capacity-building and international cooperation. China played a constructive role in the negotiation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and attended the conferences of the States parties to the ATT as an observer for two consecutive years. China hopes that the Treaty will contribute to solving the problem arising from the illicit trade of conventional arms, without prejudice to security, sovereignty, the reasonable national defence requirements of each country and legal arms trade among States. China is open to the addition of new agenda items in the light of the new situation and would like to participate constructively in relevant discussions on the issue of de-weaponization of outer space.

As the sole deliberative body in the field of multilateral disarmament within the framework of the United Nations, the Disarmament Commission has played an important role in setting the priority agenda for multilateral disarmament negotiations over the past decades. In the current new circumstances, all parties should face reality, bridge gaps in a pragmatic and positive manner and strive to reach a consensus solution in order to safeguard and enhance the status and role of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. China stands ready to work with all parties to make progress during this review cycle, thus providing fresh impetus to the revitalization of the multilateral disarmament machinery.

Mr. Alokly (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on being elected to lead the Disarmament Commission at this session. We are fully prepared to support and cooperate with you and the other members of the Bureau.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Mr. Odo Tevi, the Permanent Representative of Vanuatu, who chaired the Commission at its preceding session. We thank him for his significant work.

On behalf of Libya, I wish to align ourselves with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia, Cameroon and Qatar on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of African States and the Group of Arab States, respectively (see A/CN.10/PV.362). I also wish to take this opportunity to express to the Russian Federation our most sincere condolences following the attack. We wish the victims a swift recovery.

The Disarmament Commission is one of the oldest disarmament mechanisms at the United Nations. In January 1951, the General Assembly created the Commission as a deliberative body to deal with disarmament issues at the multilateral level. As the years went by, the Commission defined guidelines and adopted many recommendations. It also achieved consensus regarding certain issues. However, despite consistent efforts to overcome certain obstacles, paralysis has affected its work for more than a decade. That could be explained by a lack of trust, flexibility or will on the part of certain States. The Commission is also suffering now from a lack of deliberation. Libya greatly hopes that the situation will change and that we will take concrete and bold steps forward during the current session.

Over the past decade, much has been undertaken in the area of disarmament. The danger of nuclear weapons remains present. Disarmament remains a priority and a multilateral legal commitment. The only reliable way to ensure that nuclear weapons are not used is through a legally binding document for the elimination of nuclear

weapons. Such an instrument would also eliminate the threat of their use. We are concerned about the lack of progress in the implementation of commitments by nuclear-weapon States in the elimination of their stockpiles, as well as about the commitments made under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and during the NPT review conferences in 1995, 2000 and 2010. We reaffirm that those commitments will remain in effect until they are fully implemented.

A nuclear-weapon free zone, especially in the Middle East, would lead to significant progress towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. During the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, hope was kindled anew by the adoption of a resolution on the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. However, these hopes were ultimately dashed by the failure of the related 2012 and 2015 conferences. Nevertheless, we keep alive the hope that the 2020 NPT Review Conference will lead to success and will strengthen the NPT and its three pillars.

Libya is deeply concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. All States must respect international law, especially international humanitarian law. We welcome the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/258, on multilateral negotiations with a view to eliminating nuclear weapons. In March, pursuant to that resolution, States began negotiations and scheduled a conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, to be held 15 June to 7 July. Libya believes that the conference will be an opportunity to renew commitments made by States parties to the NPT, under article VI of the Treaty. We encourage all States to participate in the conference, including nuclear-weapon States.

Confidence-building measures for conventional weapons should not be confused with disarmament measures or other preconditions. Rather, such measures must lead to conditions favourable to disarmament. With regard to conventional weapons, Libya supports practical initiatives with regard to confidence-building measures. We believe that they will increase transparency and contribute to disarmament. They will also strengthen international peace and security. Nevertheless, such measures must be voluntary, on the basis of consensus among States, and must be gradual. They must also guarantee that States can keep, produce and transfer conventional weapons and their components for purposes of national security. They must be applied in a balanced manner, preserving the interests of all States, not only exporters.

Mr. Yardley (Australia): At the outset, I would like to express our condolences to the Russian Federation for the terrorist attack suffered today in Saint Petersburg.

I congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election to lead the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) at its 2017 session. We also congratulate all the Bureau members. You have the full support of the Australian delegation.

This year, the UNDC enters the critical third year of its three-year work cycle. No effort must be spared in achieving a positive outcome. In closing the session last year, the Chair — the Permanent Representative of our good regional neighbour Vanuatu — spoke positively of the common ground achieved in Working Group I and the tangible progress made in Working Group II (see A/CN.10/PV.360). That must be the starting point and the mindset for our work this year. In our deliberations in Working Group I, we must remember that there remains one common objective for the international community to share the overarching goal of bringing about a peaceful and secure world that is free of nuclear weapons.

Australia remains active in pursuit of that common objective. States may differ on the means and sequencing for achieving that goal, but ultimately the international community should focus not on differences but on common ground. The Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) cycle commences next month, and we look forward to working with Member States to ensure the effectiveness of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. Australia, through the cross-regional Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative and the Vienna Group of Ten, will jointly submit working papers to the Preparatory Commission covering issues such as the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and transparency.

As a member of this year's High-level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group, we will be looking to expand on the excellent work

of the 2014-15 Group of Governmental Experts, which produced a robust consensus report (A/70/81) reflecting the most in-depth discussions on the topic to date. We consider a treaty to be the next logical step and an indispensable one in advancing nuclear disarmament, as well as the most practical and effective way of contributing to Global Zero in the current strategic environment.

The current Working Group I draft document rightly refers to the need for effective disarmament measures to be verifiable. Australia will continue to contribute to the ongoing technical and policy work of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. We also strongly supported the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/67, on nuclear disarmament verification, and applaud Norway for that initiative.

Last year marked the twentieth anniversary of the CTBT's opening for signature. The Treaty has been a successful instrument of international cooperation, effectively establishing a global norm against testing. However, voluntary moratoriums on nuclear explosive tests are no substitute for a permanent and legally binding commitment to end nuclear testing and all other nuclear explosions. That can be achieved only by the entry into force of the Treaty. This year's Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, to be held in September, will be important in driving us towards that goal.

Australia, through its working paper to the Open-ended Working Group on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, has been seeking to reinvigorate that process by promoting a practical, outcome-focused approach, or "niche approach", as we have referred to it. The broad ranging discussions on disarmament issues we hold here in the UNDC and elsewhere are extremely useful, but do not need to be duplicated at every disarmament forum. The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I) could establish itself as a unique forum for taking forward specific issues in the SSOD I programme of action in a manageable way. We hope that Member States can support such an approach when we meet later this year.

A positive outcome in the UNDC Working Group II on conventional weapons would be an ideal contribution to the forthcoming third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects that will take place next year. We commend France for its leadership as President-designate of the Conference in starting the consultation process early. Australia will participate constructively in that process. Australia will also continue to work towards the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty, including through partnering with civil society; contributing to the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation and the Arms Trade Treaty Voluntary Trust Fund; and working closely with States across the Indo-Pacific region and elsewhere to build understanding of the Treaty and capacity to implement it. We strongly encourage further signatories and ratifications.

In conclusion, I would like to again call on all delegations to focus on common ground. There has never been a more important time for the UNDC to achieve a positive outcome.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I wish to express our gratitude for the condolences and solidarity conveyed by many delegations over the explosions in the Saint Petersburg subway. That expression of solidarity at this moment is very important to us.

The Russian Federation continues to support the strengthening of the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of global strategic stability and international security, as well as the consolidation of the arms-control and disarmament regimes. It is essential to move further in reinvigorating the United Nations disarmament machinery, with the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) as an integral component. However, we are fully aware of the complexity of the tasks we are facing.

The efficient work of the Commission is stymied by the same issues, foremost among which is the inability and sometimes even the simple lack of will to allow reasonable compromises for the sake of consensus. We are concluding another three-year cycle of the UNDC. The Russian delegation is always willing to do its utmost for the sake of achieving a productive outcome to our substantive discussions on the key items of the agenda, namely, the elaboration of recommendations for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

The Russian Federation fully shares the noble aim of building a nuclear-free world and reaffirms that principled position through concrete steps. For the third decade in a row, we have consistently carried out a step-by-step, large-scale and unprecedented reduction of Russian nuclear arsenals. Currently, we are moving towards the full-scale implementation of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. The question, however, is how to achieve that goal. Further progress in the field of nuclear disarmament will be impossible without serious preparatory work. The fundamental principle must be strengthened strategic stability and equal and undiminished security for all States, without exception.

We believe that at this stage, serious joint efforts to create conditions conducive to nuclear disarmament should be a priority. We have repeatedly drawn attention to the alarming situation we face due to the unilateral and unconstrained development of the United States missile defence assets in various regions of the world, which has stalled the overall process. While the Iran nuclear programme, which was used as justification for the United States missile defence in Europe, is no longer a pressing issue, the United States has taken no corresponding steps in response.

Moreover, we are seeing a global and destabilizing expansion of the United States missile defence system. We still have no sense of the target of all of those massively expensive preparations, which do not reflect current or future challenges and threats. Such factors as the development of conventionally armed strategic weapons, the unwillingness to abandon plans to place weapons in outer space and unresolved issues concerning the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by a State that initiated it have all had a negative impact. The growing imbalances in the quantity and quality of conventional weapons are equally not conducive to stability in modern international relations. All of those problems need to be resolved.

That is the very essence of the current situation — there are no alternatives. Moreover, that approach has been endorsed through the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) review process. The task of delivering humankind from nuclear threats is extremely complex and multifaceted. It has no simple solutions. It would be a big mistake to assume that the problem of eliminating nuclear weapons could be solved by a simple vote for a blanket ban. We must not deceive ourselves into thinking that such approaches could change the existing strategic realities that nuclear-weapon States should be guided by. As for attempts to achieve nuclear disarmament without engaging States with nuclear-weapon capabilities and in defiance of their legitimate security interests, they are doomed to failure. That was clearly demonstrated by the conference held here last week.

We must all focus on preserving the NPT and implementing the decisions adopted at its review conferences. The main task of the new review cycle is to consolidate the efforts of the international community to ensure its efficiency. A balanced approach to the three pillars — nuclear non-proliferation, the peaceful use of atomic energy and nuclear disarmament — has been the foundation of NPT-related activities for many years. Issues related to a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are at the heart of the NPT review cycle agenda. Convening a conference on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) remains an urgent and achievable goal in the context of efforts to implement the 1995 NPT resolution on establishing a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. Russia is committed to making every possible effort to implement that resolution and to promote dialogue on that issue.

The issue of conventional weapons is also very important. First, we see a potential new conventional arms-control regime in Europe. Russia champions the elaboration of such a regime, adapted to the current military and political realities in the continent. Back in 2009, our country put forward a draft comprehensive treaty on European security. However, Russia's constructive proposal is still being ignored. We remain open to such dialogue on an equal basis and with due respect for the interests of all stakeholders. We are hopeful that discussions on all the issues that we have touched upon will enrich the UNDC's substantive work and be reflected in the draft working documents before this body.

Moreover, Russia is offering new constructive ideas to facilitate the revitalization of the work of the Commission. Last year in the UNDC, at the initiative of the Russian Federation, China and the United States, we launched discussions on the inclusion of a third item on transparency- and confidence-building measures and preventing an arms race in outer space.

The formulation is contained in the relevant working paper of last year's UNDC session (A/CN.10/2016/WP.1). The relevance of the topics on transparency- and confidence-building measures and the prevention of an arms race in outer space is obvious. The overwhelming majority of States are well aware that the threat of the weaponization of outer space is an objective reality, as confirmed by the vote on General Assembly resolutions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and transparency- and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, as well as by the repeated calls of the group of 21 member States at the Conference on Disarmament regarding the importance of launching substantive work on preventing an arms race in outer space.

These two issues are receiving increasing attention at regional forums as well. The inclusion of that topic in the UNDC agenda would fully correspond with the recommendation contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/68/189). In presenting the initiative on transparency- and confidence-building measures and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, we are in many respects relying on our experience in the Conference on Disarmament, where in addition to the traditional agenda items, we are promoting compromise and the idea — potentially acceptable to all — of drafting an international convention on the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism. We call on all States to give our initiative on the UNDC's third agenda item a closer look and to take an active part in relevant discussions with a view to including it in the forum's agenda for the next three-year cycle.

In connection with the statement made by the delegation of Ukraine, we wish to note the following. First and foremost, the statement made about the alleged military aggression by our country against Ukraine and the occupation of its territory is not based in reality. We recall in this regard that Crimea united with Russia through the free will of the Crimeans. In the referendum of March 2014, more than 96 per cent of the population of the then Autonomous Republic of Crimea, including the city of Sevastopol, made a deliberate choice. This exercise of the right to self-determination was the only opportunity to protect the vital interests of the people of Crimea, who faced the anti-constitutional overthrow of the State that occurred on 22 February. As a result, the leaders in Kyiv were replaced by force by ultranationalists, who continue to affect decision-making in the country. The allegations that there was Russian aggression against south-eastern Ukraine and that the Russian Government sent significant amounts of weapons to that region are also baseless. We feel that full responsibility for the situation in Donbas belongs to Kyiv. For a third month now, based on the weapon ban, Ukrainian nationalists have continued their economic blockade of portions of the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics.

In conclusion, I would like to urge my Ukrainian colleagues to focus on fulfilling their commitments under the Minsk agreements instead of spreading inaccurate information. This is more true than ever since Kyiv has continued to flagrantly violate the provisions of that document and is attempting to resolve the conflict in the Donbas by force and bring about the region's financial ruin.

Our country wants to maintain friendly relations with its neighbours in Ukraine. This kind of tension in central Europe benefits no one, as was once again pointed out by the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, on 30 March, during the forum "Arctic: Territory of Dialogue" in Arkhangelsk.

Mr. Kim In Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): On behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I would like to congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at this year's substantive session, as well as the other members of the Bureau. I wish you every success in your work, which entails great responsibility, and assure you of my delegation's full support and collaboration.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.362).

I would like to state my country's general view on the work of the Disarmament Commission in my national capacity.

The Disarmament Commission, as the representative deliberative body in the field of disarmament, has an important role to play within the United Nations disarmament machinery. As all of us are aware, the Commission has been at a stalemate for 20 years in spite of the continuous efforts of all member States, including the members of the Non-Aligned

Movement, which seeks comprehensive and complete nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear disarmament, which is a primary issue for guaranteeing peace and security in the world, can be said to be at a crossroads. New strategies and scenarios to achieve a strategic nuclear edge on the basis of nuclear modernization and global missile systems are being further strengthened with no effort made to disguise them. Global instability and the danger of nuclear war are increasing daily owing to the biggest nuclear-weapon State's reckless arms buildup and modernization. To cope with this, nuclear-weapon States are increasing their own strategic nuclear forces in quality and quantity. My delegation believes that we cannot expect any tangible results in nuclear disarmament so long as an anachronistic policy of hegemony to dominate the world by attaining a strategic nuclear edge is being pursued.

My delegation contends that comprehensive and complete nuclear disarmament will be possible only when the United States, the biggest nuclear Power, gives up its nuclear threats and military actions aimed at bringing down sovereign States by force. The United States has the biggest stockpile of the latest nuclear weapons and is pushing forward the State strategy of dominating the world with them as its mainstay. Successive United States rulers have persistently resorted to attempts to monopolize nuclear weapons in order to dominate humankind under the deceptive signboard of nuclear disarmament and a world free from nuclear weapons.

The United States is relentlessly moving forward with its $1 billion project to modernize its nuclear weapons, which was promoted by the previous Administration under the motto of peace backed by force of arms. There have been statements calling for a repeal of treaties on the reduction of nuclear weapons signed with other big Powers. The United States, the biggest nuclear-weapon State, is a criminal State that inflicted the first nuclear disaster on humankind. Its undisguised ambition to achieve hegemony and its attempts to modernize its nuclear weapons can therefore only increase the danger of a nuclear war and a nuclear arms race on our planet.

The Korean peninsula has been turned into the world's most dangerous hot spot, where the possibility of a nuclear war is actually real. As the international community has witnessed every year, the situation on the Korean peninsula often spins out of control owing to the aggressive war exercises held one after another in and around the Korean peninsula by the United States, which will not abandon its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. At this very moment, the United States and South Korea are staging the largest-ever joint military drills, known as Key Resolve and Foal Eagle, on the Korean peninsula. Involved in the drills are huge forces of aggression, including the troops of the United States and South Korea and the forces of various vassal countries and all types of strategic assets, such as United States nuclear carriers, nuclear submarines and nuclear strategic bombers.

The United States has secretly introduced more than 6 million tons of ammunition and equipment into South Korea since the end of last year. It recently took measures for the urgent evacuation of families of United States troops present in South Korea and American citizens staying there ahead of the joint military drills. The four-dimension operation aimed at a pre-emptive nuclear attack on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is being concretely developed through nuclear war drills, and exercises targeting neighbouring countries are openly staged under the simulated conditions of the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system.

After kicking off joint military drills involving hundreds of thousands of troops and nuclear strategic assets, the United States is staging a special operation drill, the keynote of which is a beheading operation to eliminate the headquarters of a sovereign State and a pre-emptive strike operation designed to destroy its nuclear and rocket bases, which is clearly its ulterior motive.

The United States has worked hard to justify the war rehearsals, talking about their transparency and their annual and defensive nature aimed at addressing the access of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to nuclear weapons, but that is no more than a paradox. This is nothing but a cynical ploy to shift the responsibility for escalating tensions on the peninsula onto the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to justify its aggression. The United States is hell-bent on dangerous saber-rattling in South Korea. The arch criminal is disrupting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the rest of North-East Asia close to the nuclear stockpiles.

A sovereign countries has a legitimate right to self-defence in order to maintain the high alert for action that is required in grave situations in which war may break out any moment, and to improve its ability to prevent war and its elimination by an aggressor.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea had no other choice but to resort to nuclear weapons. It has done everything possible to defend its national security from the consistent nuclear threats of the United States, which have continued since the 1950s. That is why we had no option but to strengthen our nuclear deterrence with all our heart and soul. This may not be easily understood by those countries that have never experienced the nuclear weapons of a hostile Power on their doorstep and in their air space. Peace has been preserved on the peninsula, despite the outrageous moves of the United States towards nuclear war, entirely thanks to the resolute will of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its efforts to protect peace, as well as its tremendous nuclear deterrence for self-defence.

Arming ourselves with nuclear weapons is the policy of our State. The access of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to nuclear weapons has markedly reduced the danger of a nuclear war on the Korean peninsula and replaced the era of nukes of aggression, in which the United States unilaterally posed a nuclear threat, with an era of nukes of justice. As long as there exists a nuclear-weapon State that is hostile towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, our national security and the peace on the Korean peninsula can be defended only with reliable nuclear deterrence. We will continue to build up our self-defence capability, the pivot of which is nuclear force and the capability of pre-emptive strike, as long as the United States and its vassal forces keep up their nuclear threat and blackmail and as long as they do not stop the war games they stage at our doorstep, disguising them as annual events.

My delegation would like to call the special attention of the Commission once again to attempts to infringe on our sovereignty and carry out regime change, including through undisguised nuclear threats, war exercises, sanctions and a blockade. In addition, with regard to the allegation of the South Korean delegation this morning that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear missile test is a provocation and a threat to the region and the world, our delegation tried to redact these remarks as a ridiculous distortion of reality and an attempt to mislead the world. South Korea — which, under the United States nuclear umbrella, allowed the deployment of nuclear weapons and joined the United States' hostile policy of nuclear threats to and blackmail of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for over half a century — has no legal or moral ground to talk about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's use of its nuclear deterrent in the exercise of its right to self-defence.

In conclusion, my delegation expresses its full support to the efforts of the Non-Aligned Movement to realize comprehensive and complete nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Kazi (Bangladesh): My delegation joins others in congratulating you, Madam, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2017 substantive session. We also put on record our appreciation for the work done by your predecessor and the Chairs of the two Working Groups as part of the current triennial cycle.

Bangladesh hopes that our collective work in the current session will help break the impasse that has made tangible results from the Commission's work rather elusive over the past many years. We also hope that the progress and convergence achieved in the two Working Groups last year will help add further impetus to the work of this concluding session of the current triennial cycle.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/CN.10/PV.362).

We thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for sharing his insights and for his dedicated service to the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Bangladesh reaffirms that the Disarmament Commission remains the sole, specialized deliberative body with universal membership to build and foster consensus on critical issues concerning general and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament.

The forward-looking pronouncements made at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament in 2013 make us believe that there may be sufficient political will to take forward the nuclear disarmament agenda, in parallel with the pursuit of nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, but what has perhaps been missing so far is the leadership and courage to translate that political will into demonstrable results and action. It

remains to be seen if the increasingly volatile security situation around the world can be motivation enough for reinvigorating the entire disarmament machinery, including the Disarmament Commission.

Bangladesh subscribes to the notion that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation should be pursued with the same level of priority if we are to have a world free of nuclear weapons. The retention, deployment, modernization and proliferation of nuclear weapons continue to pose grave threats to the entire humankind and to the maintenance of international peace and security. The often artificial line drawn between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation continues to drive a wedge in our collective efforts to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons in a non-discriminatory, irreversible and verifiable manner.

Bangladesh therefore sees merit in the work on developing appropriate legal measures, provisions and norms through multilateral nuclear-disarmament negotiations. Accordingly, we reaffirm our support for initiating negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, as envisaged by the General Assembly. We also emphasize the critical importance of convening a high-level disarmament conference no later than 2018 to take stock of the progress made and chart the way forward.

The growing sensitization of the international community to the humanitarian consequences of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons culminated in the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/258 last year. The landmark resolution, which our delegation voted for, set the ground for convening the conference to negotiate an international legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons towards their total elimination. The general exchange of views in the first session of the conference last week should inform the first draft of the legally binding instrument, which, following intergovernmental negotiations, should pave the way for a treaty that would further strengthen and reinforce the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), particularly its article VI. Bangladesh will engage with the next NPT review cycle in a constructive manner and will look forward to reaching agreement at the 2020 review conference.

Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, non-nuclear-weapon States deserve legally binding assurance from nuclear-weapon States on refraining from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against them. That remains a priority consideration for Bangladesh in the context of the draft programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations overall.

We acknowledge the crucial role played by nuclear-weapon-free zones in advancing the negative security assurances agenda, as well as the twin objectives of global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We underscore the importance of adhering to the bold vision set out in this regard in the programme of action adopted at the the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and of pursuing and implementing the agreement reached in the 2010 NPT Review Conference in particular.

Bangladesh supports the commencement of negotiations in the CD on a fissile material cut-off treaty for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, pursuant to the mandate contained in document CD/1299. We participated in the informal consultations convened by the Chair of the Expert Preparatory Group in February 2017 and look forward to the outcome of its work. We have consistently supported the commencement of negotiations on an international treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including on the basis of the draft text submitted by the Russian Federation and China.

Bangladesh strongly believes in compliance with the essential safety, safeguard and security measures in promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy, including for accelerated development in developing and least-developed countries. In our national capacity, we shall continue to further deepen our cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and other relevant international partners in building our capacity for such compliance.

With regard to conventional weapons, Bangladesh closely follows and participates in the work concerning the Arms Trade Treaty. Our political leadership remains positively disposed towards possible ratification of the Treaty following our signature in 2013. We are currently looking into possible means to enhance our capacity for compliance with the Treaty provisions, including under the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Bangladesh will continue to participate in the existing

confidence-building and transparency measures in the field of conventional weapons.

We appreciate the international community's enhanced attention to preventing the illicit transfer of arms, and its interface with terrorism and other transnational organized crimes. We remain concerned about the growing use of improvised explosive devices targeting civilians and United Nations peacekeepers, among others, and recognize the priority attached to addressing threats posed by improvised explosive devices on the occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action this year. We underscore the need for increased support for developing and least developed countries, including those contributing troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations, to build the capacity of their concerned agencies to counter threats posed by improvised explosive devices.

Bangladesh remains generally supportive of considering a possible third agenda item, particularly one concerning an emerging issue of concern for the maintenance of international peace and security. Such consideration should not, however, deflect attention or focus from the priority attached to the objectives of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

In conclusion, Bangladesh remains committed to the potential of the Commission and looks forward to supporting the efforts of the Chair to uphold its relevance by further enhancing the breadth and quality of its substantive outcomes.

Mrs. Lal (India): Unfortunately, Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill, our Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva, could not join us today. I will read out the statement on his behalf.

> "At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam, and the other members of the Bureau on your stewardship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) session this year. Let me assure you of the full support of my delegation in the discharge of your responsibilities. I would place on record our appreciation for the work done by the UNDC Chairs of the past two years, as well as the Chairs of the two Working Groups. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Kim Won-soo for his contribution to this important and challenging task and for his presence at the meeting earlier today.
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> "We also express and extend our condolences and empathy to the people of the Russian Federation for the tragic attacks in Saint Petersburg.
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> "India associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.362).
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> "India attaches great importance to the UNDC, the deliberative leg of the triad of disarmament machinery put in place by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The Commission plays a unique role as the only forum with universal membership for in-depth deliberations on relevant disarmament issues. At a time of growing mistrust and rising international tensions, as well as numerous challenges to both the disarmament agenda and the disarmament machinery, the role of the Commission, as a platform for dialogue and cooperation assumes even greater significance. The UNDC offers an opportunity for member States to collectively make progress on significant disarmament issues by infusing coherence and consensus in the disarmament debate, which is an imperative if we are to effectively address the complex security challenges of our times.
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> "While we share the disappointment at the UNDC's inability to adopt substantive recommendations since 1999, we continue to believe in the forum's inherent value. It behooves us member States to show greater political commitment to multilateral forums and to invest in multilateral outcomes that will be of enduring value to the entire international community. Actions must match words, and rhetoric should accord with responsible behaviour. By adopting concrete recommendations by consensus to the General Assembly this year, let us demonstrate our renewed commitment to resolution 69/77, which called for revitalizing the work of the UNDC in this new triennial cycle.
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> "India attaches the highest priority to global, non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound manner. As such, India has supported the proposal put forward by the Non-Aligned Movement for the CD to commence negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-weapon convention.

Without prejudice to the priority attached to nuclear disarmament, India has also supported the commencement of negotiations of a fissile material cut-off treaty in the CD on the basis of the agreed mandate. We have called for meaningful dialogue among all States possessing nuclear weapons in order to build trust and confidence and to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines.

"India's resolutions in the First Committee on the convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and on reducing nuclear dangers, which received support from a large number of member States, reflect that approach. India's resolution on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, adopted by consensus by the General Assembly since 2002, gives expression to widely held international concerns about terrorism and the illicit trafficking of weapons-of-mass-destruction technologies, which affect international security in ways that continue to reverberate throughout the world.

"With regard to a second agenda item, practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, India supports practical confidence-building measures initiatives, as we believe that they can go a long way towards enhancing transparency and minimizing misunderstanding and misperceptions, therefore promoting a suitable environment of peace and security among States. Confidence-building must be a step-by-step process and should evolve at a pace comfortable to all participating States. The initiation and adoption of confidence-building measures must remain the prerogative of States concerned and subject to their consent. In elaborating practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, we could benefit from and build upon the guidelines and confidence-building measures endorsed by the General Assembly at its forty-first session on the recommendation of the UNDC.

"As we conclude another triennial cycle, this year's session assumes special significance in terms of achieving a successful outcome through the adoption of substantive and concrete recommendations, breaking the long-standing impasse and thereby laying a firm foundation for future progress. In that endeavour, the Commission can rest assured of India's full support and cooperation."

The Chair: We have heard the last speaker on the list for this afternoon.

I now call on those representatives who wish to speak in the exercise of the right of reply. I remind delegations that the number of interventions in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation on any item at a given meeting is limited to two and that the first intervention should be limited to 10 minutes and the second intervention to five.

Mr. Starinsky (Israel): We are taking the floor briefly to reply to the statements made by the representatives of Iran and Syria. We will not delve too deeply into those absurdities as they do not warrant serious consideration. We should not expect to hear the truth from States that have repeatedly violated their international obligations and have shown that they see no merit in sticking to the truth and facts.

These countries have violated their commitments under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and are cooperating in the commission of war crimes against the Syrian people, including through the use of chemical weapons. The Syrian regime is using chemical weapons against its own people; its declaration to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is full of gaps, discrepancies and inconsistencies. Iran is the world's leading exporting State of terror, extremism and instability. I could go on and on, but that in itself shows the level of seriousness we should accord to any of their statements.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I am taking the floor to invoke my delegation's right of reply to the delusional comments made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

North Korea's United Nations-proscribed weapons programmes represent a clear, grave threat to international peace and security. The United States strongly condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear and ballistic-missile tests, which violate multiple Security Council resolutions explicitly prohibiting these activities and any further developments to their proscribed programmes.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's provocative actions serve only to increase the international community's resolve to counter the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's prohibited

weapons-of-mass-destruction programmes. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric that threaten international peace and stability, and to make a strategic choice to fulfil its international obligations and commitments and return to serious talks.

We have consistently made clear that we will not accept North Korea as a nuclear State. We call on all States to use every available channel and means of influence to make clear to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its enablers that further provocation is unacceptable, and take steps to show that there are consequences to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's unlawful conduct. Our commitment to the defence of our allies, including the Republic of Korea and Japan, in the face of these threats is ironclad. We remain prepared and will continue to take steps to increase our readiness to defend ourselves and our allies from attack, and we are willing to use the full range of capabilities at our disposal against this growing threat.

Mr. Hahn Choonghee (Republic of Korea): It is regrettable that I must use the right of reply, but I am compelled to do so, as the argument of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea may mislead the international community.

First of all, whatever means North Korea uses to try to defend its position will not and cannot change the nature of the North Korean nuclear and missile-development programme. Numerous and consistent resolutions have been adopted by the Security Council, beginning in 2006, a decade ago, when North Korea conducted its first long-range missile and nuclear test. There are now a total of seven major Security Council resolutions, including the two most serious and robust ones adopted last year, resolutions 2270 (2016) and 2321 (2016).

The views and the voices of the international community on this issue are clear, unequivocal and plain. Last year and this, in particular, the Security Council issued a total of 14 press statements on top of the two Security Council resolutions, which strongly condemned North Korean provocation. North Korea, however, responded last year with two nuclear tests and 24 missile launches, and this year with six launches. I can say without hesitation that North Korea's attitude and behaviour not only represent its non-respect or non-observance of the relevant resolutions; they seem to be ridiculing the sincerity and the resolve of the international community, as well as the integrity of the Security Council.

North Korea continuously argues that it has been developing nuclear weapons to protect its system and regime against threat from outside. However, there is no hostility toward North Korea. No one is threatening North Korea. There is no reason to do that. The Republic of Korea and the United States have made clear on many occasions that the two countries remain open to credible and genuine talks on the denuclearization of North Korea.

In the same vein, the Republic of Korea-United States joint military exercises have been conducted annually for several decades to respond to the very clear and present military threat from North Korea, and are clearly defensive in nature. These exercises have been conducted in a very transparent manner as well, under the observation of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission.

It is North Korea, not any other country in the world, that makes the peace and security situation on the Korean peninsula unstable and dangerous. Furthermore, North Korea should realize that no country or any international organization will recognize North Korea as a nuclear State. If it continues to provoke and to be adamant with respect to its nuclear capability, it will face further isolation and much stronger reactions and tougher measures from the Security Council. I strongly urge North Korea to make a strategic decision to turn back from its nuclear-missile development programme before it is too late, and I hope that it will.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): In a previous meeting, I mentioned that I might exercise my right of reply. When the representatives of the Israeli entity find their position to be weak, they manipulate and distort the facts with a view to minimizing their responsibility for the aggression and crimes committed by the Israeli entity. It is well known worldwide that the largest weapons dealers in the world, particularly in terms of illicit trafficking, are mostly retired Israeli officers who work for the Israeli military industry.

The Israeli entity has relied for decades on so-called weapons diplomacy. It is clear to all how Israeli weaponry has fomented crises such as those in the Caucasus and elsewhere. Israel is involved in the illicit trade in all types of weapons throughout the world, collaborating and colluding with separatist movements

and criminal organizations everywhere. The Israeli entity has even formed criminal organizations for the purposes of trading in human organs, particularly those of children.

There is international unanimity that the real danger in the Middle East region is Israel's nuclear weapons. The Israeli entity possesses all types of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons as well as their means of delivery. These weapons can enable them to reach distant targets well beyond the Middle East region. Israel is the only entity in the region to possess such weapons.

Israel has also transported toxic chemical materials to terrorist groups in Syria. We previously reported such information and indicated the quantities and locations where these materials have been stored. We are awaiting further action by the Security Council on the issue. In addition, Israel trains and finances armed terrorist groups, particularly the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Al-Nusra Front, and provides them with weapons and munitions in flagrant violation of all international resolutions and instruments on fighting terrorism.

Mr. Robatjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): As I said in my right of reply in this morning's meeting (see A/CN.10/PV.362), the representative and officials of the Israeli regime are used to telling lies and making unfounded allegations about Iran, and we do not expect that regime to accept reality. What I said this morning was completely reality-based. I just want to go through some of the main points and compare them to reality and the data that shows what reality is.

First, Israel's history is full of aggression, occupation, genocide and atrocities against its neighbours and other countries of the Middle East. That is the simple reality and it is based on history. I recommend that the Israeli representative just take a look at the history books, United Nations documents and Security Council resolutions. Some 86 Security Council resolutions have been adopted as a result of Israel's acts of aggression, occupation and atrocities against the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples and other countries of the region.

The second reality is that Israel is not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or to any other treaty governing weapons of mass destruction. Israel possesses nuclear weapons, which is why 120 States of the Non-Aligned Movement and many other States have expressed great concern regarding Israel's nuclear-weapon programme, which poses a serious and continuing threat to the security of neighbouring and other States, and have condemned Israel for having such a programme. It is not just Iran, but the international community itself, that believes as much, because it is a matter of reality.

The third reality is that a regime with such a history cannot be trusted when it has nuclear weapons. Such a regime poses a most serious threat to international security.

The last reality, to which I also referred in my statement this morning, is that this regime has no respect for international law and international rules. It has arrogantly and flagrantly disregarded all 86 Security Council resolutions that have been adopted, despite the fact that it is the international community that is calling on Israel to abide by them.

Israel's representatives at the United Nations have clearly ridiculed the Organization and its Member States in their statements. A clear example of such behaviour was the Israeli representative's statement at the time of the adoption of the Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), in December 2016.

These are the realities. They are not allegations and lies. They are based on reality, and Israel cannot escape them.

Mr. Leshchenko (Ukraine): I would like to exercise my right of reply to the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation.

The Ukrainian delegation stands by its statement delivered earlier today (see A/CN.10/PV.362) and would like to underline that the conflict in certain areas of the eastern regions of Ukraine was caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine that started with the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, together with the so-called referendum that was undertaken with the total support of the Russian military forces. The referendum, by the way, was not recognized by the international community.

We are fully committed to the implementation of the Minsk agreements mentioned by the representative of the Russian delegation. However, uncontrolled sections of Ukraine's State border with Russia remain one of the key sources of escalation on the ground because of the influx of illegal supplies of arms, military equipment and military personnel from the east. If Russia ended

its military support for its proxies in our territory, the conflict in the Donbas region could be settled peacefully very soon without any external assistance.

Mr. Kim In Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the remarks of the representatives of the United States and South Korea.

The United States and South Korea condemned the self-defence measures of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on nuclear and ballistic-rocket development as a so-called threat and provocation that endanger world peace. My delegation totally rejects the remark as a ridiculous argument and a distortion of reality.

It rings true to many people that the Korean peninsula issue is in a vicious cycle of nuclear and rocket tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, with the world's aggravating attention and sanctions triggering new rounds of nuclear and rocket tests by my country. However, people fail to see — or simply turn away from, sometimes for years — the reality that each link of the cycle is directly connected to the hostile policy of the United States and a consequence of its nuclear threat directed at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The United States nuclear threat against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a form of blackmail that is neither a temporary, recent annoyance nor a fictional concept. It is an actual concrete threat that the United States has imposed on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for the past decades because it is United States policy to protect the option of a pre-emptive nuclear strike on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The United States once plotted a nuclear strike on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea early in 1950, and it has deployed a large number of nuclear weapons in South Korea since then. Since the late 1960s, it has conducted joint military drills with South Korea in which they practice deploying these weapons. These annual United States-South Korea joint nuclear exercises have continued for more than 40 years.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has made the most strenuous efforts to eliminate the United States nuclear threat. To this end, it has tried dialogue and negotiations for the establishment of a denuclearized zone and relied on international law. Despite these efforts, the United States has not withdrawn its nuclear threat against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Instead, it has gone so far as to, in 2002, officially designate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a target for its nuclear pre-emptive strikes.

Given the fact that neither dialogue nor international law has helped to efface the world's biggest nuclear threat posed by the world's biggest nuclear Power, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been left with no other choice but to resort to nuclear means to cope with it. In these gravest of circumstances, with the United States on a rampage against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea while it upgrades its nuclear weaponry, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been forced to accelerate the development of its own nuclear weapons in order to defend its social system and national security.

As far as the allegations of the South Korean delegation are concerned, I do not think it is worth repeating my delegation's position, but I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize South Korea's wanton violations of the sovereignty and unity of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in calling our defensive measures provocations, a challenge and a threat. The more South Korea dedicates itself to distorting reality and misleading the world, the more clearly and undeniably the United States, through its cooperation, is responsible for aggravating the situation on the Korean peninsula. In fact, the peace and security of the Korean peninsula, and the world in general, are being reliably defended by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea thanks to its policy of self-defence through nuclear deterrence.

Once again, I would like to repeat that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's unwavering position is to continuously bolster its self-defence military capability, the pivot of which is the force of the nuclear pre-emptive attack capability, unless the United States and South Korea give up their ambitious war operations, evidenced by the military drills taking place at the doorstep of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea every year.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): With regard to the statement by the representative of Ukraine, we repudiate his allegation that the 2014 referendum was linked to the presence of Russian armed forces. It is true that at the time of the

referendum the peninsula was host to Russian forces, but our forces were there on a fully legal basis in accordance with the then-existing agreements between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the residency of the Black Sea fleet. Furthermore, the Russian armed forces personnel were much smaller in number than was provided for under the quota in the agreements. But the Russian soldiers did not take any part in organizing the referendum, and not one international observer or member of the press noted that fact.

With regard to the implementation of the Minsk agreements, if the Ukrainian delegation was truly committed to carrying out these agreements and the Security Council's resolutions, including resolution 2202 (2015), the conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine would have ended long ago. Two years have elapsed since the Presidents of Russia, France and Ukraine and the Chancellor of Germany signed off on the Minsk agreements, but no political, economic or humanitarian obligation has been carried out by Ukraine. No amnesty has been declared. No exchange of prisoners of war has taken place. No laws on the special status of specific territories in the eastern portion of Ukraine have been put into place. The Constitution of the country has not been changed. The election laws have not been prepared and, of course, no elections have taken place. If the Ukrainian delegation is truly interested in a solution to the conflict in its own backyard, it really should switch from words to actions.

Mr. Hahn Choonghee (Republic of Korea): I apologize for taking the floor again. First of all, North Korea must heed the unanimous adoption of the most recent sanctions resolution by the Security Council (resolution 2321 (2016)). The international community has made clear that it will no longer sit back and watch North Korea's contempt and disregard for international rules and norms.

North Korea is turning a deaf ear to the international community's repeated warnings and shows no signs of stopping its flagrant violations of international rules and norms. On the contrary, it keeps busy by casting groundless aspersions on the Security Council and the international community while continuing to threaten international peace and security. North Korea should realize that its total rejection of Security Council resolutions, which have been adopted unanimously, including with the support of all five permanent members, tells the international community that North Korea rejects the authority of the Security Council, which is the world's primary and most important organ for defending international peace and security.

When North Korea joined the United Nations in 1991, it agreed to abide by all Security Council resolutions. I would like to ask North Korea whether it thinks that Council members, who adopted the last seven relevant resolutions unanimously, made a mistaken, unreasonable decision. I firmly believe that Council members individually and independently reviewed all the information and circumstances regarding the North Korean provocation and made a very sober and sovereign judgement that North Korea's nuclear-weapon programme is unjustifiable and unacceptable, deserves strong condemnation and should be stopped without delay. We therefore call on North Korea to immediately fully, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle its programme of weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the relevant international norms. The Republic of Korea will continue to work with the international community to dismantle North Korea's nuclear and missile programme.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I will be brief, given the late hour. I just wanted to take the floor one last time in response to the remarks made by the representative of North Korea. I urge the North Koreans once again to refrain from provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric that threaten international peace and security and to make the strategic choice to fulfil their international obligations and commitments and return to serious talks.

Mr. Kim In Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Once again, I reject the allegations made by the representatives of the United States and South Korea. I wish to make a brief comment to some States with regard to the United Nations sanction resolution.

As I have said before, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had no choice but to go nuclear in order to protect its sovereignty and dignity. There is a consistent nuclear threat from the United States. Although reality shows that it was the United States that compelled the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to go nuclear, the Security Council declared the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ongoing nuclear- and ballistic-missile-related activity to be a clear threat to international peace and security, even adopting the so-called sanctions resolution (resolution 2321 (2016)), which was recently concocted against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

As for the resolution's legal basis, there is no provision either in the Charter of the United Nations or any other international code that says that nuclear and ballistic-rocket activity poses a threat to international peace and security. The countries that carried out such activities before the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did have never been called into question by the Security Council. One can therefore only ask on what grounds and with what authority the Council adopted a resolution prohibiting nuclear and ballistic-rocket activities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The United States has no moral right to force the States Members of the United Nations to implement such unfair and unjust resolutions, and Member States have no moral obligation to implement them.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.